

Life planning

Recognitive listening and orientation paths for ecological citizenship

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Abstract¹: Moving from the category of *recognitive listening*, this contribution reflects on the *Pedagogy of orientation*, which places the individual at the center of their existential integrity and promotes the development of ecological and digital citizenship. The heuristic focus is on the possibility of implementing pedagogical and educational itineraries inspired by innovative orientation models that foster a critical attitude in the subject, with a view to building a life plan. This is achieved through the acquisition of metacognitive competence relating to the deliberation which is exercised in relation to the world system. The participant observation activity carried out by the *General Pedagogy* research group, coordinated by Prof. Claudia Spina and Prof. Fabrizio Pizzi (*Department of Human, Social and Health Sciences*, University of Cassino and Southern Lazio), fits within this hermeneutic horizon. This activity is related to *OrientaHack*, *Esplora, progetta, crea* (Explore, design, create) conceived and implemented by *OpenHub Lazio*. Based on the *Activation du développement vocationnel et professionnel* methodology (ADVP - Pelletier, Boujold, Noiseux), this experience aims to encourage ecological and responsible citizenship, as well as active democratic participation, in order to protect the *well-being* of individuals and the entire community.

Keywords: recognitive listening, orientation, ecological citizenship, participant observation.



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Introduction – Towards building a life plan

Orientation, understood in its deepest meaning, is a complex educational process that transcends mere academic and professional choices, taking root in the existential dynamics of identity formation (Mura, 2018; Cunti, Priore, 2020). The notion of ‘orientation’ has traditionally been conceived in an informative-diagnostic key but has gradually expanded to include educational paradigms rooted in the development of self-orientation skills and the individual’s ability to develop a life plan (Girotti, 2005).

In this evolutionary perspective, recognition and listening emerge as basic pedagogical categories. They are capable of structuring meaningful educational relationships and representing the epistemological and ethical foundations of a *Pedagogy of orientation* that places the individual at the center in their existential integrity. The re-

¹ The division of labor resulting from joint research is as follows: Spina (introduction and § 1); Pizzi (§ 2); Mauti (§ 3); Cannizzo (conclusion).

cognitive posture, in its active (*recognizing oneself* - the reflective awareness of the subject) and passive (*being recognized* - the legitimate gaze of the educator - Ricoeur, 2005; Spina, 2025) forms, constitutes the ontological precondition for any authentic orientation process; listening is a transformative practice, which enables self-narration and the dialogical negotiation of meanings.

Orientation is exemplified in educational models that emphasize relational and process-oriented dimensions. In particular, reference is made to the *Activation du développement vocationnel et professionnel* (ADVP) approach (Pelletier, Bujold, Noiseux, 1974; Cappuccio, 2016, pp. 127-141), which shifts the focus from an informative-diagnostic orientation to a formative orientation, giving central importance to *recognitive listening* as an essential “pedagogical mediator”.

Within this conceptual framework, it should not be underestimated that navigating contemporary complexity also means developing awareness of one’s interdependence with the natural and social environment, assuming ethical responsibility toward future generations and the planetary ecosystem. The *listening and recognitive logos* thus extends to the demands of “non-human life”, educating us in existential planning, within which orientation becomes a common good and educational practice (Girotti, 2025), aimed at achieving “ecological citizenship”, which is now an urgent educational (and civic) necessity.

1. Recognitive listening: a pedagogical category underpinning the paideutic processes of orientation

Recognition is the ontological foundation of the orientation process. Rather than merely observing the aptitudes/skills of the learner, the educator is called upon to recognize their existential uniqueness and inherent potential for self-fulfillment (Dusi, 2017, pp. 99-111). In the orientation relationship, the emotional (love), legal (rights), and social (solidarity) dimensions are inextricably intertwined: recognition means accepting the other in their biographical entirety, affirming their rights to self-determination, and supporting their sense of community belonging (Honneth, 1993, p. 30; 2002, pp. 114-157). Pedagogical recognition therefore implies authentic educational care, «che consiste nel modo del lasciar essere [...] gli altri nella loro essenza» (Mortari, 2006, p. 39). Authentic orientation therefore rejects standardized or purely diagnostic approaches in favor of a phenomenological approach rooted in a *grateful posture*, *listening* to biographical narratives, deep desires, and existential possibilities. Listening to autobiographies becomes a “maieutic device” through which the subject can “tornare a vivere: è un tornare a crescere per sé stessi e gli altri, è un incoraggiamento a continuare a rubare giorni al futuro” (Demetrio, 1996, p. 16). If hermeneutic, discerning, and empathetic listening presupposes (in accordance with Buber’s lesson) the *I-You* relationship (as opposed to the instrumental *I-It* relationship), then evaluative/prescriptive logic must be abandoned, in the field of orientation practice, in order to establish a genuine dialogue. During this ethical-existential exchange, the educator plays a crucial role as a “pedagogical presence”, guiding the learner through reflection and discovery processes (Mortari, 2003, pp. 47-52). Hence the importance of training educators as orientation facilitators. This training must include the acquisition of emotional-relational and communication skills, as it is

necessary to cultivate the *art of listening* and grasp latent possibilities between the lines of a narrative.

Recognitive gaze and *listening logos* are interdependent dimensions of a *dialogical paideia*, essential to the orientation process. *Recognizing oneself*, *recognizing others*, and *being recognized* could not occur without *profound listening* (Rogers, 1970, p. 88; 2012, pp. 61-62; Spina, 2018). In truth, the listening mode generates recognition, giving value to the lived and narrated experience. This makes it possible to define *educational orientation* as a *process of constant accompaniment*, which enables the individual to recognize their own peculiarities and shape their identity, with a view to structuring their life plan. In today's complex and fragmented society, rediscovering the transformative and perfective value of *recognitive listening* means reaffirming the dignity of the paideutic relationship as a place of emancipation and *humanization* (Ducci, 1979, pp. 7-15).

2. Orientation and innovative models

For several decades, orientation has played a strategic role in educational policy, serving as an essential tool for reducing dropout rates and promoting academic success. Its importance is also widely recognized in the field of active labor market policies. The value of these interventions is supported by a substantial regulatory and scientific framework, which includes *European Council Recommendations* (2004; 2008), *Ministry of Education guidelines and decrees* (from 1997 to 2022), and *Reports* and research conducted by national and international bodies.

The literature in this field highlights a transition in theoretical reference models, shifting from a traditional model focused on matching personal aptitudes (interests and personality traits) with the professional profiles required by the market, to a contemporary model centered on the progressive empowerment of the individual, in which the individual is encouraged to develop self-orientation skills, continuous learning, and the dynamic construction of their personal and professional identity (Margottini, 2024, p. 99).

In this sense, orientation «si concretizza in un insieme di azioni volte a sostenere ciascuno nel pieno sviluppo di sé in relazione ai propri bisogni, interessi, aspettative, valori, promuovendo l'autodeterminazione del soggetto per la piena inclusione sociale e professionale, educandolo a monitorare il proprio percorso e compiere scelte adeguate» (Margottini, 2024, p. 100).

Over the last forty years, we have seen the gradual emergence of a macro-paradigm that can be defined as formative orientation (Biagioli, 2023; Cunti, 2017). This paradigm includes all those methods that share the goal of building and developing learning with the individual at the center (Batini, 2024, pp. 37-38).

With the emergence of this paradigm, which views orientation as a means of progressive learning and progressive autonomy, the education and training system has taken on increasing importance with regard to orientation activities (Batini, 2024, p. 19). In order to plan their educational and professional path, individuals must learn about themselves and develop appropriate skills and competences (Sicurello, 2020).

The emphasis on aspects such as progressive development and identity formation has made schooling, especially compulsory and mainstream education, an ideal context for orientation dynamics. However, it is now clear that there is a need for orientation throughout life – *life-long guidance* (Council of Europe 2008; ELGPN 2015) – with the concept of a 'life plan' at the heart of the orientation process in everyone's life (Boffo 2014; De Pietro, Capalbo 2023; Montanari 2023).

In this regard, the issue of early orientation also emerges. Truly effective orientation should consist of a set of activities that, starting in childhood, help students recognize their talents and interests. This process enables individuals to make informed choices and manage their own growth path independently. Early career education therefore seems consistent with «una visione della scuola che ne sottolinei la funzione “orientativa”, sicuramente presente e riconosciuta nei documenti strategici, politici e normativi europei oltre che nella letteratura scientifica, ma ancora non del tutto affermata all’interno del sistema scolastico» (Del Gobbo, Frison, Galeotti, 2024, p. 231).

2.1. *The Activation du développement vocationnel et professionnel Methodology (ADVP)*

Among the most effective modern orientation teaching methods, the *Activation du Développement Vocationnel et Personnel* (ADVP) stands out. Due to its multidimensional characteristics, it is an operational tool suitable for achieving integrated personal development (Cappuccio, 2004, p. 224).

The ADVP methodology, developed in the early 1970s by D. Pelletier, G. Noiseux, and C. Bujold of Laval University in Quebec (Canada), aims to guide the personal and professional development of students and mobilize the intellectual, volitional, and emotional resources necessary for the fulfilment of their developmental tasks (Pelletier, Bujold, Noiseux, 1974). This method has also been further developed in Italy thanks to the work of Viglietti (1989, 1991) and Cappuccio (2003, 2009, 2012, 2015).

On a theoretical level, the ADVP method is based on Tiedeman and O’Hara’s decision-making theory (1963), Super’s professional development model (1974, 1990), and Guilford and Hoepfner’s intelligence model (1971).

This methodology recognizes educational institutions, such as schools (Cappuccio, 2016) – but also universities (La Marca, Martino, Falzone, 2022) – as strategic mediators in the processes of personal and professional development.

The ADVP model envisages that career choices are made through an evolutionary process involving certain stages — discovery, classification, evaluation, experimentation — and that the individual completes four fundamental evolutionary tasks before choosing a direction: exploration, crystallization, evaluation, and realization. «Le tappe dell’evoluzione della scelta si basano sull’esplorazione del soggetto di tutte le sue possibilità, al fine di formulare un progetto personale e poterlo poi rendere reale» (Batini, 2024, p. 33).

The educational purpose of the ADVP method therefore consists in activating mental abilities through exercises that enable students to perform tasks that are useful for their development and professional maturation (Cappuccio, 2004).

From an inclusive perspective, the ADVP model promotes self-management in study and work, implying «la necessità di sviluppare un articolato sistema di competenze strategiche che sono indispensabili per affrontare con successo l’ampio quadro delle trasformazioni che investono il mondo del lavoro e della formazione» (Cappuccio, 2016, p. 131).

3. **OrientaHack. Explore, design, create: participant observation**

Moving from recognition and listening as fundamental pedagogical categories of the paediatric processes of orientation, the General Pedagogy research group of the *Department of Human, Social, and Health Sciences* at the University of Cassino and

Southern Lazio, coordinated by Prof. Claudia Spina and Prof. Fabrizio Pizzi, conducted a participant observation of an educational activity designed by *OpenHub Lazio*² and entitled *OrientaHack. Esplora, progetta, crea*. Based on the *Activation du Développement Vocationnel et Professionnel* methodological framework (ADVP; Pelletier, Boujold, Noiseux, 1974), the activity aimed to implement a paideutic orientation intervention capable of *acting maieutically* on the development of metacognitive skills (La Marca, Cappuccio, 2020). The goal was to accompany students on a path of learning and self-knowledge, enabling them to build their own life plan (including their professional life).

The orientation activity was divided into two different educational components, called *Hackathon* and *EsploraMestieri*. The first involved two classes (46 students) from a local high school on September 16, 17, and 18, 2025; the second involved the same students in an early orientation experience, aimed at 41 pupils attending two fifth-grade classes at primary schools located in the Cassino (FR) area.

During the *Hackathon*, high school students took part in the *challenge: how can we actively engage 9- and 11-year-old children in a 30-minute workshop, with the aim of exploring one or more of the elements that come into play in the orientation process, in a creative and age-appropriate way?* After accepting the challenge, the students were divided into eight mixed groups and invited to work cooperatively in a designated area within the *OpenHub* facility in Cassino. They also took part in several MasterClasses based on a dialogical and maieutic approach. These promoted meta-reflective processes on the concepts of ‘orientation and ‘planning’ and provided a set of methodological tools to help students carry out the activities. However, it should be noted that the MasterClasses revealed that many young adolescents have difficulty *speaking* (Arendt, 2016) *in front of a group*.

Participant observation, understood as an intentional and systematic methodological device (aimed at understanding the behaviors, relational dynamics, and metacognitive processes activated by subjects in educational situations - Cassibba, Salerno, 2023), was conducted directly in the field, in accordance with constructivist, pragmatist, and systemic epistemic principles. It involved the observer as an accepted member of the community, with the aim of capturing the symbolic meanings and representations of the world that guide the participants’ actions. Recognizing the essential subjective dimension of the observation process (which refers to the influence of the observer’s theoretical and experiential background - Spina, 2024), it should be noted that the guiding criteria focused on the presence of gender bias regarding occupations, active participation, argumentative ability, group collaboration, and creative thinking.

Different dynamics emerged in the working groups, highlighting the role of emotional and cognitive scaffolding among peers, the emergence of leadership, and situations of poor project awareness. In particular, the comparison between groups revealed that cooperative work encourages the development of creative and shared ideas, while the absence of critical reflection, both individually and collectively, can

² *OpenHub Lazio* is a project funded by the Lazio Region, European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) Program 2021-2027 Policy Objective 4 “A more social Europe” Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1060 Regulation (EU) No. 2021/1057 - Priority “Employment” - Specific objective b) Modernizing labor market institutions and services to assess and anticipate skills needs, ensuring timely and tailored assistance and support in the context of labor market matching, transitions, and mobility ESO4.2.

lead to operational uncertainty and dependence on figures perceived as leaders. The *Hackathon* concluded with a presentation of the project proposals to a jury. The jury identified the “winning” proposal and highlighted strengths in the various projects. These included: attention to the theme of professions and gender; the idea of an orientation-related path; the correct consideration of needs and areas of expertise as crucial factors in structuring career choices; and the poetic and creative dimension necessary for developing a future self-image anchored in personal aspirations. Also significant was the tendency to implicitly reproduce gender stereotypes in the representation of professions. This critical issue generated a moment of shared reflection on cultural prejudices.

EsploraMestieri, the final phase of the educational initiative promoted by *OpenHub*, involved high school students testing out activities they had designed directly with primary school children, according to the principles of learning by doing (Dewey, 2014). This experience highlighted the effectiveness of an early orientation model based on play, responsibility, and active personal commitment on the part of adolescents. This experience fostered in participants a renewed awareness of their power to act, recognition of their own resources and their ontologically relational essence, resulting in a significant educational outcome.

The results of the participant observation (also discussed during the *European Researchers' Night*) highlighted aspects of the educational practice designed and implemented by *OpenHub*, in which orientation emerges as a path of recognition of existential planning, which is rooted in listening, relationships, and reflection inherent to one's own *dynamis* (Mortari, 2021).

Conclusion

The reflection that emerged from the *OrienteHack*³ experience revolves around two main themes: the centrality of the individual in orientation processes; and the importance of building local networks to facilitate individual and collective growth.

OrienteHack is an innovative experiment in the field of orientation, with the aim of promoting personal leadership in defining educational and professional life plans. Together with *Esplora Mestieri*, it highlights young people's ability to get involved and activate creative energies.

The impact on the groups involved results in greater motivation, active citizenship, and growth in the ability to face the continuous choices that characterize contemporary life. From a broader perspective, the purpose of *OpenHub*'s orientation initiatives is to accompany young people into the workforce by enhancing their personal growth and providing spaces for reflection on the meaning and management of their self-orientation.

The concept of ‘orientation’ is expressed through the action of accompanying, sustaining, informing, supporting, and encouraging individuals, while leaving them in charge of their own path. Individual narrative is a valuable tool for understanding the

³ This is the result of work conceived and coordinated by the author and by Dr. Sandra Huesca Avila Sandra (orientation counselor/trainer and skills assessment consultant. She collaborates in supervising and co-designing some *OpenHub* Lazio services on behalf of ENAIP NAZIONALE *Impresa Sociale*).

complexity that separates individuals from the world of work. This distance is influenced not only by traditional factors such as training, experience, and skills, but also by various conditioning factors such as the lack of educational qualifications, precarious socio-economic situations, difficulties in reconciling family and work life, prejudice, violence, post-university disorientation, and other critical issues. These conditions give rise to specific needs that require customized solutions and a flexible, inclusive approach. The *OrientaHack* experience demonstrates that effective orientation must be conceived as a dynamic, participatory process capable of activating local networks and focusing on the individual with their potential and critical issues.

In conclusion, the success of orientation paths depends on the networking between schools, universities, public bodies, businesses, and associations. This networking makes it possible to overcome fragmentation, share practices, and develop common strategies. Awareness of complexity is essential. The challenge lies in adopting a model based on a shared vision that values talent and strengthens the community, while respecting the diversity of individual paths and stories, in order to promote development, inclusion, and sustainable growth. The invitation is to work together and co-create, in the belief that only through coordinated action is it possible to effectively address the challenges of the contemporary labor market in a specific community. This is because the ontological relational essence of human beings gives rise to the pedagogical and educational need to think in terms of networks, in order to promote recognitive self-listening paideutic paths. These paths can guide individuals in building their life plans and giving concrete form to an ecological citizenship.

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